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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: WITH MONKS IN SHANGRI-LA

CLASSIFIED BY: Tina Onufer, Acting Consul General, State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Monks at the Ganden Sumtsen Ling Monastery in Shangri-la County, Yunnan Province, told ConGenOff August 18 that monks from their monastery studying in the Tibetan Autonomous Region were all sent back to Yunnan after March 2008. Despite PRC compulsory education regulations that stipulate children must be educated in government schools, some novice monks as young as eight years of age continue to be educated within the monastery. The Ringa monastery, also in Shangri-la County, displays an easily hidden picture of the Dalai Lama. End Summary.

Background: Shangri-la Tourist City and Regional Hub  
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12. (C) Shangri-la (formerly Zhongdian) city, located at an altitude of 3200 feet on the old Tibet tea trade route in northwestern Yunnan Province, is the largest city in Shangri-la County, and its airport also serves Deqin County, which borders on the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

13. (C) Shangri-la County has a milder climate than most other Tibetan areas which, as one Tibetan from Deqin told ConGenOff, "made us much more subject to the onslaught of the Chinese." Very few ethnic Tibetans have had formal education in Tibetan, although many speak it and continue to study informally and many signs are in Tibetan. A Tibetan shop proprietor told ConGenOff he is studying Tibetan with 30 others in a study group at his Baptist church. ConGenOff observed that unlike other Tibetan areas, family altars in many Shangri-la households include pictures of PRC leaders. A further sign of assimilation and creeping syncretism is the belief of many locals that Mao Zedong is a reincarnation of an old Tibetan warrior spirit, a notion a Lhasa Tibetan recently told ConGenOff would be inconceivable in Lhasa. Since the March unrest, Tibetan areas of Yunnan have been much quieter than other Tibetan areas of China.

A Visit to the Ganden Sumtsen Ling Monastery  
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14. (C) The Ganden Sumtsen Ling Monastery on the outskirts of Shangri-la city has about eight hundred monks divided into eight sections corresponding to different areas of the Shangri-la county. People from these different areas visit the monastery to support "their monks." Considerable construction work is being done on the monastery, and a hotel is being built behind it.

15. (C) ConGenOff spoke to several monks who had visited India for several months and met the Dalai Lama. One monk told ConGenOff he spent three months at the Drepung monastery in southern India during 2005.

After March Unrest, Monks Returned Home from Lhasa  
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16. (C) The monks at Ganden Sumtsen Ling Monastery said that local authorities prohibited monks from visiting Lhasa monastery this year and ordered monks from Yunnan who had been in Lhasa monasteries for several years to return to Yunnan Province after

the outbreak of the March protests. (Note: In August, the Deqin Daily, official newspaper of the Communist Party Committee of Deqin County, reported that the twelve monks who had returned to Deqin County were being given two weeks of patriotic education, including lectures by Deqin Party Committee and United Front Department leaders.)

#### Visit to the Ringa Monastery

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17. (C) ConGenOff visited Ringa Monastery, a small monastery approximately a forty-minute drive from Shangri-la. According to the guide, Ringa Monastery is close to the Dalai Lama. In the temple at the monastery, atop a religious picture was a photograph of the Dalai Lama of a size that could be easily hidden if a sensitive visitor should appear.

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